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NSC BRIEFING

5 February 1958

**SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN UNION**  
(Short form)

- I. Details of union are far from settled, except that Nasir will be boss. Reactions among Arab states vary widely.
- II. In Syria, public reaction to last Saturday's declaration was slow.
  - A. Syrian businessmen apprehensive over the effect of union.
    1. Heavy demand on foreign exchange developed. Despite govt efforts Syrian pound has dropped 10%.
  - B. Labor circles decidedly unenthusiastic over prospect of emigration of "millions" of Egyptian peasants to Syria.
  - C. These fears may generate trouble over the long-term; at present they are just mutterings.
- III. Egyptian officials have not expressed any great enthusiasm, although press continues to push union.
  - A. Schedule for implementation of the union is:
    1. On 5 Feb <sup>both parliaments approved</sup> presentation of constitution; Qawatli to nominate Nasir as president with absolute power for indefinite period.
    2. On 21 Feb plebiscite for approval of president and constitution; present parliaments to be dissolved and replaced by a Nasir-appointed parliament. Syrian representation to be one-half. Nasir will appoint executive councils for Egypt- and Syrian which will be separate <sup>regions</sup> regims.
  - B. Cairo press states union will invite other Arab states to join, either in complete unity or as a part of a federal union.
  - C. Egyptians, too, are beset by economic worries. Officials believe that Egyptian economy too shaky to join union.

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**IV. Other Arab states:**

**A. Jordan and Saudi Arabia:**

1. Husayn fears Egypt and Syria will launch campaign to have Jordan and Lebanon join union. He hopes for meeting with kings of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, but the prospects are dim. Husayn also wants Iraq to withdraw from Baghdad Pact in order to facilitate Saud's joining confederation.
2. King Saud opposes union but cautions against action by the three kings which would subject them to attacks <sup>and</sup> opponents of Arab unity.

*B. Iraq is stalling on recognizing union & there are rumors that Baghdad*

- D. Iraq has decided to withdraw its ambassadors from Egypt and Syria, and to withhold recognition of the Egyptian-Syrian union. Husayn may follow Iraq's example. However, Iraqi foreign minister has intimated Iraq could not afford to be the only Arab state, except Jordan, which failed to recognize the union. He is also anxious to know what the US position will be.*

**C. Lebanese Christians fear an end to balance between Christians and Muslims as the Muslim majority falls under spell of Arab unity.**

1. Chamoun has requested written confirmation from Britain of previous assurances of support for Lebanon.

**D. In Kuwait, gala celebrations, drummed up by Egyptians, advocating Kuwaiti adherence to union.**

**E. Yemen's crown Prince Badr has arrived in Cairo. He intends to have Yemen confederate with the union.** 25X6A

**V.**

~~But increased Egyptian-Syrian offensiveness~~ 25X6  
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